

Remarks/Arguments

Claims 2-11 and 13-26 are pending in this application. Claims 13 and 23 are amended in this response. Claims 2-11 and 13-26 remain pending after this response.

Claim Objections

Claims 23 and 24 are objected under 37 CFR 1.75(c).

Claim 23 has been amended in the current response. Namely, claim 23 has been amended to depend from claim 22. Claim 24 remains unchanged; but, now depends from claim 23 that itself now is in proper dependent form. The applicants request withdrawal of the objections to claims 23 and 24.

35 U.S.C. §102(b) (Claims 18-21) ('536 Misunas et al.)

The Examiner rejects claims 18-21 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Misunas et al., U.S. Patent 4,174,536. The applicants respectfully traverse the rejection.

The Examiner states that "Misunas et al. '536 inherently teaches transmitting of handshake signals when he discloses, 'a prescribed communication protocol'. i.e. - any type of device can communicate with the switch and all other devices attached to it by following a prescribed communication protocol, col. 4, lines 33-36." (Office Action at Pp. 2, 3) The applicants respectfully assert that any protocol that allows "any type of device to communicate with the switch and all other devices" does not

inherently teach the method recited in claim 18. More particularly, the applicants do not believe that the '536 reference teaches "a processor [programmed to] transmit respective controller handshake signals...alternately through each of said plurality of data ports." (Claim 18) Indeed, FIG. 8 teaches the "general operational flow diagram of the control program contained in the memory of FIG. 5 and executed by the processor of FIG. 2 in accordance with the present invention" but does not appear to teach a processor programmed to "transmit... controller handshake signals" (claim 18) but rather teaches looking for a message present at a port. (Col. 9, line 49; FIG 8 "Any Input?" step) The applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the 102(b) rejection of claim 18 based on the assertions, above.

Claims 19-21 depend from claim 18 and so contain each of its limitations. For at least the reasons stated above for claim 18, the applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the 102(b) rejections of claim 19-21.

35 U.S.C. §103(a) (Claims 2-7, 9-11, 13-17 and 22-26) (Yokoyama '875)

The Examiner rejects claims 2-7, 9-11, 13-17 and 22-26 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Yokoyama, U.S. Patent Publication 2002/0016875.

Regarding claim 2, the Examiner assert that a "processor [programmed to] transmit a second controller handshake signal... if said first handshake signal does not result in communication with a controller" is anticipated by what follows the result of the determination in step S103 being negative (page 2, paragraph 28, lines 4-5). (Office Action at P. 4) However, step S103 only teaches "[determining] whether or not the switch 11 is switched

so that the ports 3a and 9a are connected." (Yokoyama '875 at P.2, paragraph 28, lines 1-3) The step does not depend on the result of communication with a controller (or any component), only on the present configuration of switch 11. Because of the Examiner's reliance on this anticipation for the 103(a) rejection, the applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the 103(a) rejection of claim 2.

Additionally, the Examiner asserts that the language "wherein the processor is programmed to transmit a first controller handshake signal through said first data port" is anticipated at page 1, paragraph 6, lines 20-22 of Yokoyama '875, where "first data port" is anticipated by first input output terminal 3. (Office Action at P4) However, the applicants respectfully assert that Examiner's cited text refers to the cascade connection command sent through input/output terminal 5 and so claim 2 is not anticipated using the Examiner's cited text. More particularly, the applicants assert that "the first control signal" is not sent through terminal 3 as asserted by the Examiner, but rather terminal 5. In support of this interpretation, the applicants refer the Examiner to paragraph 6, lines 4-6 of the SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION that suggests the first control signal is the cascade connection command, the first connection unit being input/output terminal 3, the input terminal being reference numeral 3b, the output terminal being reference numeral 3a and the second control signal being the Ack command. Because a processor programmed to transmit "a first controller handshake signal through said first data port" is not anticipated at page 1, paragraph 6, lines 20-22, the applicants respectfully assert that the Examiner's reliance on anticipated of the element in support of the 103(a) rejection is misplaced. The applicants

respectfully request withdrawal of the 103(a) rejection of claim 2.

Claims 3-7 and 9-11 depend from claim 2 and so contain each of its limitations. For at least the reasons stated above for claim 2, the applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the 103(a) rejections of claim 3-7 and 9-11.

Regarding claim 13, the applicants have amended claim 13 in the current response to overcome the rejection. Namely, claim 13 has been amended to recite, "inhibiting data pass-through at a second data port ~~in connection with~~ during said first handshake signal transmission." The applicants respectfully assert that the Yokoyama '875 publication teaches away from this configuration as switch 11 is switched to allow data pass-through while transmitting the cascade connection command through terminal 5a. The applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the 103(a) rejection of claim 13 based on its amendment.

Claims 14-17 depend from claim 13 and so contain each of its limitations. For at least the reasons stated above for claim 13, the applicant respectfully requests withdrawal of the 103(a) rejection of claims 14-17.

Regarding claim 22, the Examiner asserts that Yokoyama '875 teaches "testing for the presence of a controller (i.e. -an electronic apparatus 60 sends control command signal to a preceding apparatus 50, page 1, paragraph 7, lines 5.8 and Fig. 1)." (Office Action at P.7) However, applicants respectfully observe that any immediately preceding apparatus only receives an Ack command and any immediately succeeding apparatus a cascade connection command. Each apparatus clearly does not test for the presence of preceding apparatus. Rather, apparatus merely

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acknowledge receipt of cascade connection commands from a preceding apparatus. Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the 102(b) rejection based on these facts.

Claims 23-26 depend from claim 22 and so contain each of its limitations. For at least the reasons stated above for claim 22, the applicants request withdrawal of the 102(b) rejection of claims 23-26.

Applicants believe that claims 2-11 and 13-26 are in condition for allowance and respectfully request that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: April 8, 2008

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